



Food Allergies: What PTOs and PTAs Need to Know

Food Allergy Tips for Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)

Today, one in 13 children has food allergies, and nearly 40 percent of these children have experienced a severe or life-threatening reaction. Many of these reactions happen at school. Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) are a vital part of the school community, providing an organized family and community component. As a PTO or PTA leader, you can be a powerful voice for your children and other children, advocating for their health, safety, education and overall well-being.

Children with food allergies need your support to ensure their safety and inclusion. From classroom parties, to school family nights, to after-school fundraisers, keep in mind that all students in the community should be able to participate safely.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published National Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools, available at www.foodallergy.org/CDC. The recommendations below are a few examples of recommended practices to help ensure students with food allergies are safely included. We encourage you to review the complete list of the CDC's Recommended Practices, on pages 41–43 of the guidelines available at www.foodallergy.org/CDC.

- Avoid the use of identified allergens in class parties, holidays, celebrations, crafts, snacks or rewards.
- Use non-food incentives for prizes, gifts, awards, and fundraisers.
- When possible, avoid ordering foods from restaurants because food allergens may be present, but unrecognized. Have ingredient information readily available for all pre-packaged and/or catered food items.
- Do not exclude children with food allergies from events or extra-curricular activities.
- Make sure that food allergy policies and practices address foods available during fundraisers, class parties, at athletic events and during after-school programs.
- Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of emergency and train staff to use them.

Did you know?

Food allergies may constitute a disability under the law. Children with food allergies are entitled to an equal opportunity to participate in all school programs and events including extra-curricular activities. This usually applies to activities held by groups such as PTOs and PTAs. (See Section 5 of the CDC guidelines for more information on federal laws that pertain to food allergies.)

Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care Programs*. 2013.
www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan by Food Allergy Research & Education
www.foodallergy.org/document.doc?id=234

Protecting Students with Disabilities—Guidance from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html

U.S. Department of Education “Dear Colleague Letter”—School obligations under Section 504
www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201301-504.html





Be a PAL[®] to Friends with Food Allergies

Did you know that 1 in 13 kids in the United States has a food allergy? That's about two kids in every classroom. For kids with food allergies, even a tiny amount of the food they are allergic to can make them very sick.

The most common food allergies are to milk, egg, peanuts, tree nuts (like walnuts and almonds), soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish (like shrimp and crab). But a person can be allergic to any food!

Since food allergies affect so many kids, it is good to learn how you can Be a PAL[®] to a friend with food allergies! Here's how:



Know that food allergies are very serious.

It's hard to believe that foods you eat every day can hurt others, but it's true!

If someone with a food allergy eats something they are allergic to, they can get very sick and sometimes have to go to the hospital.

If a friend or classmate has a food allergy, don't tease, bully or make fun of them. Tell an adult right away if you see other kids picking on someone with a food allergy,



Don't share your food with friends who have food allergies.

You can share jokes and laughs with your friends with food allergies, but don't share food. For kids with food allergies, sharing food can be very dangerous. So don't offer kids with food allergies anything from your lunch or snack. Why? Because it may have something in it that could make them very sick or hurt them.



Wash hands after eating.

Washing your hands with soap and water after you eat is very important. It's a good way to clean off any food that is on your hands.



Help all of your friends and classmates have fun together!

There are lots of ways to have fun without food! Listening to music, playing board or video games, making crafts, going for a bike ride, and playing sports are just some of the cool things you can do together. This way, everyone stays safe and has fun!



If a friend with food allergies feels sick, get help right away!

If your friend feels sick or thinks they may have eaten something they are allergic to, tell an adult right away or dial 911! They will make sure your friend gets help and gets the medicine they need to feel better.

**Save this handout so you won't forget how to Be A PAL[®],
and Protect A Life From Food Allergies!**

